

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8982

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

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AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

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CINCURSARPAC

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AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 HONG KONG 12522

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, VN

SUBJECT: PEKING AND HANOI

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SUMMARY: SERIOUS CONTRADICTIONS EXIST BETWEEN HANOI AND PEKING

IN INDOCHINA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA AND IN THE WIDER ARENAS OF WORLD POLITICS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT. NEVERTHELESS, BOTH ALSO HAVE A LARGE STAKE IN MAINTAINING CLOSE AND CO-OPERATIVE BILATERAL RELATIONS. IF THE DRV LAUNCHES A MAJOR OFFENSIVE IN THE SOUTH IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, WE BELIEVE CHINA WOULD OFFER NOMINAL PROPAGANDA SUPPORT WHILE MINIMIZING THE APPEARANCE OF ITS OWN INVOLVEMENT. IF THE OFFENSIVE HAD LIMITED OBJECTIVES PEKING WOULD PROBABLY EXPECT THAT THE EFFECT ON ITS WIDER INTERESTS COULD BE CONTAINED AND IT MIGHT QUIETLY AGREE TO HELP MAKE UP DRV EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY LOSSES. THE POSSIBILITY OF CHINESE SANCTIONS TO RESTRAIN THE DRV IN THE EVENT THE OFFENSIVE SEEMED TO BE THREATENING BOTH THE SURVIVAL OF THE PEACE AGREEMENTS AND U.S. COUNTER-ACTION MUST BE AN OPEN QUESTION IN HANOI AND, AT THIS POINT, POSSIBLY IN PEKING AS WELL. BUT WHATEVER HAPPENS IN SOUTH VIETNAM, CHINA OVER THE NEXT YEAR, WILL VERY LIKELY INCREASE EFFORTS IN BOTH LAOS AND CAMBODIA TO BALANCE DRV INFLUENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. PEKING-HANOI RELATIONS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN MARKED BY A HIGH DEGREE OF AMBIVALENCE. BOTH HAVE A LARGE STAKE IN MAINTAINING CLOSE AND COOPERATIVE BILATERAL RELATIONS, BUT SERIOUS CONTRADICTIONS EXIST IN THEIR RESPECTIVE INTERESTS IN INDOCHINA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA AND IN THE WIDER ARENAS OF WORLD POLITICS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT.

2. CHINA, OF COURSE, WISHES TO MAINTAIN A FRIENDLY REGIME ON ITS SOUTHERN BORDER AND TO BLOCK SOVIET EFFORTS TO GAIN A PRE-EMINENT POSITION IN THE DRV. PEKING ALSO FEELS BOUND TO SUPPORT ITS VIETNAMESE NEIGHBOR IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN CHINA'S ANTI-IMPERIALIST CREDENTIALS IN THE MARXIST AND THIRD WORLDS AND TO PROTECT ITS CREDIBILITY AS AN ALLY. MOREOVER INTERNAL IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL FACTORS INCLINE THE REGIME TO MAINTAIN ITS COMMITMENT TO THE DRV. FOR ITS PART, HANOI NATURALLY WISHES TO RETAIN THE GOOD WILL OF ITS GIANT NEIGHBOR; TO OBTAIN CHINESE SUPPORT FOR ITS GOALS OF RECONSTRUCTION AND REUNIFICATION; AND TO USE CHINA AS BOTH BALANCE AND LEVERAGE IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

3. DESPITE THE MUTUAL INTDMEST IN CLOSE AND COOPERATIVE RELATIONS, THE FOREIGN POLICY ORIENTATIONS AND NATIONAL GOALS OF THE TWO GOVERNMENTS IN IMPORTANT RESPECTS ARE NOT COMPLEMENTARY. PEKING'S PERCEPTION OF A LONG-TERM SOVIET STRATEGY OF BUILDING AN ASCENDANT CONFIDENTIAL

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WORLD POWER POSITION THROUGH NEUTRALIZING THE U.S. AS A CONTENDER FOR HEGEMONY IN EURASIA AND ISOLATING AND CONTAINING CHINA AROUND ITS PERIPHERY (HONG KONG 6846) IS NOT SHARED BY HANOI. AS A PRODUCT OF THEIR OVERRIDING CONCERNS IN THE SOUTH, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE NOT SURPRISINGLY PERSIST IN THE VIEW THAT "U.S. IMPERIALISM" IS THE NUMBER ONE ENEMY OF THE WORLD'S PEOPLE. HANOI HAS THUS FOLLOWED THE SOVIET RATHER THAN THE CHINESE LINE ON MOST INTERNATIONAL ISSUES SUCH A THE INDO-PAK WAR, THE MID-EAST CRISIS AND EUROPEAN

EVENTS.

4. CHINA'S PRIMARY CONCERN IN ASIA AT PRESENT IS COUNTERING SOVIET ENCIRCLEMENT AND PROMOTING DETENTE WITH THE U.S. AND JAPAN. THESE OBJECTIVES--WITH THE PROBABLE EXCEPTION OF THE JAPANESE-RELATED ONE--MUST BE VIEWED BY HANOI AS UNDERMINING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ITS FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL GOALS IN THE SOUTH. THE CHINESE BELIEVE THAT A PREMATURE U.S. MILITARY WITHDRAWAL FROM SEA WOULD CREATE A DANGEROUS VACUUM WHICH THE SOVIETS AND POSSIBLY THE JAPANESE WOULD ATTEMPT TO FILL. THIS TOLERANT IF NOT FAVORABLE VIEW OF CONTINUED U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN ASIA IS CATEGORICALLY REJECTED BY THE DRV. NHAN DAN FOR EXAMPLE, IN A NOV. 20 COMMENTARY INDIRECTLY ATTACKED PEKING ON THIS ISSUE BY LASHING OUT AT PREMIER TANAKA'S STATEMENT THAT U.S. FORCES ENSURE STABILITY AND SECURITY IN ASIA. THE HANOI PAPER ROUNDLY DENOUNCED THE U.S.-JAPAN MST WITHOUT REPORTING TANAKA'S COMMENT THAT CHINA ALSO FAVORS CONTINUATION OF THE TREATY.

5. SPECIFICALLY IN INDOCHINA, THE PRC APPEARS CONCERNED TO AVOID AN INTENSIFICATION OF MILITARY ACTION WHICH COULD STRAIN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AND COMPLICATE THE AREA'S GENERAL MOVEMENT TOWARD DETENTE AND ACCOMMODATION WITH CHINA. ONE MAY EVEN SPECULATE THAT THE CONTINGENCY OF AN EARLY COMMUNIST MILITARY VICTORY IN SOUTH VIETNAM UNCOMPLICATED BY U.S. INTERVENTION WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE WELCOMED IN PEKING BECAUSE OF THE CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE THIS MIGHT CREATE THROUGHOUT ASIA IN THE U.S. SECURITY COMMITMENT. CONSEQUENTLY, THE PRC IN ITS PUBLIC STATEMENTS, AND PRESUMABLY IN PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AS WELL, HAS EMPHASIZED THAT A LONG-TERM AND PROTRACTED POLITICAL STRUGGLE IS REQUIRED TO OBTAIN THE VIETNAMESE GOAL OF NATIONAL REUNIFICATION. (IN THIS CONNECTION, THE CHINESE MAY POINT TO THEIR OWN LONG-TERM APPROACH TO THE "LIBERATION" OF TAIWAN.) PEKING HAS PROBABLY TRIED TO DISCOURAGE ANY CAMPAIGN BY THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS TO ACHIEVE MAJOR MILITARY GAINS IN THE

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NEAR FUTURE, I.E. OVER THE NEXT YEAR.

6. WHILE CHINA HAS NO VITAL INTEREST IN THE UNIFICATION OF VIETNAM AND PROBABLY PREFERS THAT ITS REALIZATION BE DELAYED, IT VERY LIKELY SEES THE PROCESS AS INEVITABLE. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE CHINESE AT THIS POINT FORESEE ANY REALISTIC PROSPECT OF DRIVING A WEDGE BETWEEN THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS AND THE NORTH IN ORDER TO PERPETUATE THE DIVISION.

7. ON THE OTHER HAND, PEKING CLEARLY SEEMS TO SEEK AS MUCH INDEPENDENCE FROM HANOI AS POSSIBLE FOR CAMBODIA AND LAOS. THIS POLICY SPRINGS FROM CHINA'S DESIRE

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8. BUT IN ANY EVENT, CHIAN PROBABLY EXPECTS THAT THE FORCE OF
NATIONALISM WILL LEAD WHATEVER GOVERNMENTS EMERGE IN THESE COUNTRIES
TO SEEK CLOSE RELATIONS WITH CHINA AS A BALANCE TO VIETNAMESE (AND
THAI) INFLUENCE. BY DEMONSTRATING MODERATION IN ITS OWN AMBITIONS

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IN REGARD TO LAOS AND CAMBODIA, WHILE PLAYING AN ACTIVE ROLE WHEN
POSSIBLE (E.G., ROAD BUILDING AND PARTICIPATING IN THE AIRLIFT IN
LAOS, AND IN CAMBODIA ECONOMIC AID FOR THE RGNVC AND SUPPORT AND
MANIPULATION OF SIHANOUK) THE PRC PROBABLY CALCULATES THAT THE

CHANCES OF MAINTAINING AN EQUILIBRIUM ARE FAIRLY GOOD.

9. HANOI ALSO VIEWS THAILAND IN TERMS OF ITS SPECIFIC GOALS IN INDO-CHINA WHEREAS PEKING APPROACHES BANGKOK IN THE BROADER PERSPECTIVE OF GREAT POWER POLITICS AND COMPETITION IN AISA. THE DRV PERCEIVES THAILAND AS A RIVAL IN LAOS AND CAMBODIA WHILE THE PRC PROBABLY INCREASINGLY DISCERNS SOME USEFUL RTG BALANCING ROLE IN THESE COUNTRIES. THESE DIFFERENCES ARE APPARENT IN CURRENT HANOI AND PEKING COMMENT ON THAILAND. WHILE THE NORTH VIETNAMESE CONTINUE TO PROTEST THE PRESENCE OF U.S. BASES IN THAILAND, THE CHINESE STOPPED THEIR COMPLAINTS EVEN BEFORE THE CESSATION OF THE BOMBING OF CAMBODIA. NHAN DAN (E.G. DEC. 10) HAS BLASTED THE SANYA GOVERNMENT AS A "DICTATORIAL JUNTA" AND "TOOL OF U.S. IMPERIALISM" BUT PEKING MEDIA HAVE CAREFULLY AVOIDED ANY CRITICISM OF THE NEW REGIME.

10. CHINA AND VIETNAM ARE ALSO RIVALS FOR INFLUENCE IN THAILAND ITSELF. HANOI PRESUMABLY WOULD NOT WELCOME CONTROL OF THE THAI GOVERNMENT BY THE PEKING-LINING, ETHNIC-CHINESE INFLUENCED THAI COMMUNIST PARTY. THERE HAVE IN FACT BEEN INDICATIONS THAT THE THAI REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IS DIVIDED POLITICALLY AS WELL AS GEOGRAPHICALLY INTO CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE-SUPPORTED WINGS (HONG KONG 8184).

11. IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT, HANOI WHILE NEUTRAL ON THE SINO-SOVIET DESPUTE ITSELF, ESSENTIALLY SIDES WITH THE ORTHODOX SOVIET BLOC. THE VIETNAMESE HAVE TAKEN MOSCOW'S SIDE ON SUCH MAJOR ISSUES AS THE 1968 INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, THE SUPPRESSION OF THE SUDAN COMMUNISTS IN 1971 AND ALLENDE'S FALL THIS YEAR. THE LAO DONG MAINTAINS CLOSE FRATERNAL RELATIONS WITH CCP IDEOLOGICAL ANTAGONISTS SUCH AS THE FRENCH AND JAPANESE COMMUNIST PARTIES, BUT HAS HAD MINIMAL OR NO CONTACT WITH MAOIST PARTIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE THAI COMMUNIST PARTY. FURTHERMORE, HANOI, UNLIKE PYONGYANG, HAS NOT ENDORSED THE OUSTER OF LIN PIAO (WHO IN 1971 AS PART OF HIS REPUTED OBJECTION TO DETENTE WITH THE U.S. MAY HAVE ADVOCATED GREATER CONSIDERATION OF HANOI'S INTERESTS).

12. WHILE THERE IS THUS CONSIDERABLE SCOPE FOR PEKING-HANOI TENSIONS, NEITHER SIDE CAN GAIN BY THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MAJOR STRAIN
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IN RELATIONS AND BOTH WILL WORK HARD AT BALANCING THEIR INTERESTS AND PAPERING OVER THEIR CONFLICTS. IF THE DRV AGAINST CHINA'S EXPRESSED DESIRES, LAUNCHES A MAJOR OFFENSIVE IN THE SOUTH IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, WE BELIEVE CHINA WOULD OFFER NOMINAL PROPAGANDA SUPPORT WHILE MINIMIZING THE APPEARANCE OF ITS WON INVOLVEMENT. IF THE OFFENSIVE HAD LIMITED OBJECTIVES, PEKING WOULD PROBABLY EXPECT THAT THE EFFECT ON ITS WIDER INTERESTS COULD BE CONTAINED. IN THIS CASE, THE PRC POSSIBLY WOULD AGREE QUIETLY TO INCREASE ITS MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO MAKE UP FOR DRV LOSSES IN THE OFFENSIVE. THE POSSIBILITY OF CHINESE SANCTIONS TO CONSTRAIN THE DRV IN THE EVENT THE OFFENSIVE SEEMED TO BE THREATENING BOTH THE SURVIVAL OF THE PEACE AGREEMENTS AND U.S. COUNTER-ACTION, MUST BE AN OPEN QUESTION IN HANOI AND, AT

THIS POINT, POSSIBLY IN PEKING AS WELL. UNLESS MOSCOW CUTS BACK ON ITS ASSISTANCE, HOWEVER, PEKING WOULD PROBABLY NOT DO SO.

13. WHATEVER HAPPENS IN SOUTH VIETNAM, PEKING WILL BE IMPELLED BY ITS LONG-RUN STRATEGIC INTERESTS TO SEEK TO PREVENT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A HANOI-DOMINATED INDOCHINA BLOC. OVER THE NEXT YEAR CHINA VERY LIKELY WILL INCREASE ITS EFFORTS IN BOTH LAOS AND CAMBODIA TO BALANCE DRV INFLUENCE. CHINA, IN FACT, HAS A FAR GREATER INTEREST THAN THE U.S. IN THE INDEPENDENCE--FROM HANOI--OF THE TWO LESSER INDOCHINESE STATES. TO THE EXTENT THAT THIS IS ALSO OUR DOMINANT CONCERN, WE COULD LOOK WITH EQUANIMITY TOWARD THE DAY WHEN OUR INVESTMENT IN THESE COUNTRIES IS SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCED AND CHINA MIGHT PLAY THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL PROTECTOR.

14. THIS PROJECTION OF PEKING'S POLICY TOWARD HANOI COULD CHANGE: IF THE PRC LEADERS REVISED THEIR ASSESSMENT OF SOVIET INTENTIONS OR OTHERWISE ALTERED THEIR STRATEGIC POSTURE; IF HANOI TURNED STRONGLY AGAINST THE USSR; OR IF A RADICAL LEFTWING LEADERSHIP ASSUMED POWER IN PEKING. NONE OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS SEEM PROBABLE AT THIS TIME; AND EVEN IF PEKING AND HANOI DID DRAW MUCH CLOSER TOGETHER, THIS WOULD BY NO MEANS NECESSARILY LEAD ONE OR BOTH OF THEM TO LAUNCH O
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